

A Brief Overview of Revisionist Critiques of Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names

An Introduction

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Abstract

This paper introduces a series of revisionist papers scrutinizing the flawed approach with which the Israeli Holocaust Remembrance Museum Yad Vashem is collecting the names (and so, numbers) of Jews who are said to have died in “the Holocaust.” In addition, it gives a brief overview of what Yad Vashem is saying about it, in fact is admitting, about it on their own website.

For decades, the Israeli Holocaust Remembrance Museum Yad Vashem has been collecting names of those who allegedly died in the Jewish Holocaust of World War II. One of the earliest critics of that enterprise has been the U.S. revisionist Arthur R. Butz, who wrote in his 1976 book *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*:[\[1\]](#)

“It is said that the Yad Vashem archives in Jerusalem now have the names of between 2.5 and 3 million Jewish ‘dead from the Nazi holocaust.’ The data have supposedly been ‘collected on one-page testimony sheets filled in by relatives or witnesses or friends.’ [...] There is no doubt that many Jews died during the war, so we should expect that a part of the Yad Vashem claim is valid, but it is also the case that there is no possible way to distinguish, in this data, between Jews who actually died during the war and Jews with whom the signers of the ‘testimony sheets’ have merely lost contact. The data is particularly meaningless when it is a ‘friend’ who has contributed a declaration; I have lost contact with a great many former friends and acquaintances, but I assume that nearly all are still alive. Indeed, the use of the testimony of ‘friends’ for the purpose of gathering the Yad Vashem data shows that the data is mostly meaningless; such ‘friends’ have no more basis for declaring their missing acquaintances dead than I do.”

With the advent of the internet, Yad Vashem eventually moved its database containing the data of those claimed to have fallen victim to the Holocaust online as well, making it easy to both browse the data and to add new data. This, too, led to some criticism. In the 2005 edition of my *Lectures on the Holocaust*, the German edition of which appeared in March of that year, I wrote (Castle Hill Publishers, Hastings, pp. 38f.):

“R: The Yad Vashem Research Center in Israel has compiled such a list [of victims]. As of today, it contains about three million names, with one million stemming from published sources, the great majority of the remainder coming from written reports made by relatives, friends, or locals.[\[2\]](#) Yad Vashem’s promotion brochure states in this regard:[\[3\]](#)

‘This is a race against time – search the site today, submit unrecorded names and pictures, and help ensure that every Holocaust victim has a place in our collective memory. [...] Gather information – talk to your family: As you may not know about relatives who might have perished in the Holocaust, we recommend that you first contact your family: parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles to collect as much information as possible about all of those persons that might [sic] have been murdered. [...] If you have

family members who were murdered in the Holocaust, [...] you may either submit names and details online via the site, or use the attached Page of Testimony'

L: In other words, anyone can register victims with Yad Vashem.

R: Precisely. For example, Yad Vashem mentions a case where a local inhabitant simply reported all the Jews living in the area before the war as having perished, for the simple reason that: [\[4\]](#)

'After the war, he realized that no Jew returned to his home region [...]

L: Does anyone check whether the indications are correct? After all, it could be that those missing persons are now living somewhere in the U.S., in Israel, or elsewhere.

R: As far as I know, nothing is checked. You can order such forms from Yad Vashem, fill them out and send them back. The address is Hall of Names, Yad Vashem, P.O.B 3477, 91034 Jerusalem, Israel; Telephone: 00972-02-6443582; via Email: names.research@yadvashem.org.il.

L: Couldn't I just as well send them data on my dog?

R: Now listen. I don't think that this kind of thing is going on, but it would seem to me that there is no way to avoid errors, double entries, or reports on survivors. In any case, this Hall of Names is a rather insignificant source, from a scientific point of view."

At the same time as these lines were published, the French revisionist Jean-Marie Boisdefeu published a [critical review of a few of this database's entries](#), revealing that it even contains survivors, and that some individuals have at least two entries. [\[5\]](#) A year later he followed that up with a [paper demonstrating](#) that entire sets of Jewish deportees have been entered multiple times, and also that some of the data stored in the database shows that Jews sent to Treblinka were reported dead further to the east, in other words, for them Treblinka served indeed as a transit camp. We have reproduced both papers in this issue of *Inconvenient History*, and we hope that we will soon be able to offer an English translation of them as well.

The next three entries in our mini-series on Yad Vashem's victim database come from the Italian website olodogma.com, which was temporarily banned in mid-2016 after Italy passed an anti-"denial" law. These articles give you an insight not only into how the Yad Vashem database works, but also about the background on Italy's anti-"denial" law, and why it was enacted in the first place.

It all started with several participants of a Stormfront blog picking up on Yad Vashem's fraudulent way of maximizing the number of names of alleged Holocaust victims stored in their database. One of the individuals in that discussion was Dr. Mirko Viola, who, together with three others, ended up being arrested, among other things for allegedly mocking the victims of the Holocaust. I will not dwell here on his case, which involves many political hot-button topics outside of the ambit of what CODOH and IH usually address.

Although the civil-rights aspects of this case are of interest, they will be ignored here as well, for they could and should be the object of a separate paper focusing on civil rights in Italy. We will here focus entirely on one of the main charges Dr. Viola faced during his criminal proceedings: that of "spreading negationist ideology," *i.e.*, Holocaust revisionism, which, as Dr. Viola correctly observed, "it is not an ideology, but a rigorous research method of historiography." His offense? He invented imaginary Jews

gassed in the Polish death camps by entering made-up data into the Yad Vashem database, thus exposing that there is no quality control and that anyone can enter anything, turning the whole enterprise into a big joke. Of course, making a joke about the Shoah victims is socially unacceptable at best, and considered a crime in many countries.

Dr. Viola's iconoclastic act triggered a series of blog posts on olodogma documenting how easy it is indeed to submit invented information to Yad Vashem and have it included in their database of Shoah victims.

The first paper included here, "[Come aumentare il numero dei morti nell'olocausto/How to Increase the Number of Holocaust Deaths](#)," is a merger of two olodogma blog posts, and starts with Dr. Viola's case and briefly verifies his claim about how easy it is to submit any data, true or false, to Yad Vashem.

The second is a brief analysis of some entries in the Yad Vashem database by Italian scholar Carlo Mattogno – "[Breve nota su 'The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names' e il numero dei morti ivi riportati/Brief Note on 'The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names' and the Number of Deaths Reported therein](#)," arguing along the same lines as Boisdefeu's 2005 paper.

The third paper – "[Magda Goebbels'... nel database dello Yad Vashem/Magda Goebbels'... in the Yad Vashem Database](#)" – probably represents the pinnacle of mockery: the inclusion of Adolf Hitler and Magda Goebbels, wife of Hitler's chief of propaganda, in Yad Vashem's database, a prank which was reported by CODOH earlier.^[6] That latter paper also includes a number of reactions to that prank which were originally part of other olodogma posts.

While some of the material written by olodogma is at times somewhat polemical in tone, which we don't normally approve, we still think that the events reported in them are highly instructive and contain important information to gauge the reliability and trustworthiness of the data constituting Yad Vashem's database.

After these deeply embarrassing revisionist revelations about the fraudulent methods of Yad Vashem, the institution changed the way they described their data.

As of late 2016, their database contained about 4½ million names,^[7] but they no longer claim that all of them are unique or even victims of the Holocaust. In fact, their website now has a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) which sheds some light onto the significance of their data.^[8] For instance, next to the obvious victims of the Holocaust, they admit there that their database also includes as victims those who died as a result of armed resistance, who died up to six months after the liberation (until the end of October 1945) as well as Jews who died during flight, evacuation and deportation from the advancing German army. (Answer to the question "How do you define a Shoah victim?") On the origin of the names, Yad Vashem gives three main sources: a large part stems from submissions "primarily by survivors, remaining family members or friends; another part comes from local projects aiming at determining the identities of Jews who lived at certain places before the war. The last part originates from official, mainly German wartime documents.

The question whether every name in the database relates to a victim murdered beyond any doubt, was answered as follows:

“No. The Database is based on thousands of different sources. Yad Vashem experts have analyzed each source and have distinguished between sources that attest to murder, sources that point to a very high probability of murder (presumably murdered) and sources that lack a direct reference to murder.

It is probable that part of the individuals whose names appear only in sources of the third category, that is, lacking a direct reference to murder, were murdered at a later stage, but this cannot be determined on the basis of the documentation available as of now.”

So they admit indirectly that their data isn't just about murder. Their generous definition of Holocaust victims encompasses evidently also those who surely died but not by way of outright murder. More still, just because a relative or friend claims that someone was murdered doesn't make that murder a certainty. The questionable method used by Yad Vashem results from the answer to a question about the Lodz Ghetto:

“The list prepared by the Organization of Former Residents of Lodz in Israel contains some 240,000 personal records. It is known that the vast majority of the Jews imprisoned in the Lodz ghetto were ultimately murdered [not true!], but the editors of the list did not make a distinction between those who were murdered and those who survived. Due to the limitations of the list itself, there is no way of knowing with any measure of exactitude which of the individuals on the list was not murdered, and therefore we stated next to each name on the list ‘presumably murdered.’ The names of those for whom we have documentation attesting that they did indeed survive do not appear at this stage on the Database.

If you find the name of a ghetto prisoner and you know that she or he survived, please fill out a Shoah Survivor Registration form. In this way you can help us distinguish between the names of the murdered and the survivors on the list.”

Hence, their method can be summarized as follows: Initially they assume that all Jews within Hitler's reach were “presumably murdered.” Then they collect all the names they can somehow get, and delete from that list those for whom they receive documentary or anecdotal evidence of their survival.

Needless to say, that amounts to a reversal of the burden of proof.

Notes

- [1] 4th edition, Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2015, p. 31.
- [2] www.yadvashem.org/remembrance/names/site/online.html; retrieved in early 2005, now defunct.
- [3] www.yadvashem.org/remembrance/names/site/Names_Collection.pdf; retrieved in early 2005, now defunct.
- [4] www.yadvashem.org/about_yad/magazine/data3/whats_in_a_name.html; retrieved in early 2005, now defunct.

- [5] François Sauvenière, “La banque(route) du Yad Vashem ou comment arriver à 6000000,” *Dubitando*, No. 3, March 2005.
- [6] olodogma, idem, “How to Become a ‘Saint’ and Get Canonized through Yad Vashem!,” *Smith’s Report*, No. 213, August 2015, p. 4, www.codoh.comhttps://codoh.com/library/document/3376
- [7] <http://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?> (accessed on Nov 18, 2016).
- [8] <http://www.yadvashem.org/archive/hall-of-names/database/faq> (accessed on Nov 18, 2016).

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